

Baronian Xippas

Press release

Achraf Touloub

Discord venue
2 rue Isidore Verheyden

13.03. – 18.04.2020

Opening

Thursday 12.03.2020,
from 6 - 9 pm

Achraf Touloub

Discord venue

Achraf Touloub has a unique view of our time - one of an ultra-connected world that turns our relationships with time, space, information and beliefs upside down. Using various media, he aims to intercept these transformations, their impact on our relationships and how they transform our bodies.

Discord Venue uncovers one of the paradoxical dynamics of our time - that of evolving contradictions, continuously dividing the same domains. In these dichotomous domains, the belief systems our globalised world has been built on are starting to crumble.

The artist does not consider the breakdown of these connections to be at all symptomatic of the bankruptcy of the neoliberal norm or of the collapse of a modernist utopia. On the contrary, the twilight of neoliberalism can only truly be felt when it has been totally integrated by our bodies. It has not collapsed at all, but instead has reached the apex of its success - its personification and the total takeover of our bodies and imaginations. We do not need to save the forms and institutions of market logic. We have already become its ambassadors.

The exhibition brings this ambivalence to the fore: the expansion of the mathematical abstraction of capital and the process of its carnal assimilation. The three types of works featured in the exhibition are possible representations of this ambivalence, with the systems, their mechanics and their collapse on the one hand and our bodies, transformed until they get assimilated, on the other hand. Then there are his wooden sculptures. They express our beliefs, our myths and other spiritual concepts, including the altar as part of the scene in a way.

These forms have proven difficult to place. They do not fit within even the most tentative of interpretations. His works on paper are just as full of dissected symbols, figures and architectural and urban landscapes. They use a visual language aimed at kick-starting our intuition. The moment of doubt that partly defines all art makes us question the meaning of these drawings. Achraf Touloub announces this from the start: "You should not look at my works, but live with them". The artist's works negate time and go beyond the question of the 'now'.

Achraf Touloub's conceptual research has a paradoxical understanding of our use of technology. It is as if - parallel to its unstoppable progression - it also gravitates towards a return to a primitive dimension. His oil paintings on canvas or 'soft sculptures', for instance, are like a second skin. Some of them are based on a conceptual and peaceful archaism, which almost returns us to the original state, the human body,

the measure of all things. However, the materials used are synthetic, as if these new contemporary traditions can only be generated by non-natural things, like the plastic nature of polyester.

We find ourselves at the end of a cycle and although the ensuing chaos looks frightening, it should be seen as the start of a new cycle - the cycle of *Return*. A return to the invisible dimension we still dare to call *Reality*. So let us celebrate the inherent precariousness of any attempt at perception, as it is the saving grace of our failed understanding.

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Achraf Touloub was born in 1986 in Casablanca, Morocco, he currently lives and works in Paris, France. He graduated at the École de Beaux-Arts in Paris in 2013. His work has been featured in personal exhibitions held at the Villa Medici in Rome (2019), the Plan B gallery in Berlin (2019; 2016), the Albert Baronian gallery in Brussels (2015; 2011) and the Isa gallery in Mumbai (2015). He recently participated in the *Baltic Triennial 13* (2018), the *57th Venice Biennale* (2017) and the *Kochi-Muziris Biennale* (2016). Touloub has also participated in group exhibitions held in such venues as the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Deutsche Bank Collection in Berlin, the Barjeel Foundation in Sharjah, and the Arab World Institute and Maison Rouge in Paris.